

Tips for Managing Media Use

to reduce unnecessary exposure to indirect trauma

Has this ever happened to you?



You wake up feeling okay



You grab your phone to check the news



You spiral into a low and anxious mood

With constant access to social media, news, streaming platforms, and other online content, many of us are exposed to more traumatic material than we realize. Short-form content like reels and clips can include distressing footage that is hard to process at the speed it appears. Combined with graphic entertainment and ongoing news coverage of suffering, this steady stream of indirect exposure can take a toll on our well-being.

While secondary traumatic stress is most often associated with indirect exposure that occurs through our work, repeated exposure to distressing media can add to the amount of traumatic material we are taking in, contributing to symptoms such as intrusive thoughts, heightened alertness, or emotional distress. Becoming more intentional about what, when, and how much we consume can be one way of reducing unnecessary exposure.

How do we stay informed while protecting our well-being?



Limit to 10 mins/day: Set a limit on time spent checking news sources to avoid media rabbit holes and remove news alerts from your devices.



Use trusted sources: Avoid platforms that focus on shock value. Research the bias and reliability of the sources you use most often.



Protect your sleep: Avoid consuming digital media a few hours before sleep; rest is necessary to reset your nervous system.



Browse intentionally: Consider deleting apps from your phone that promote endless scrolling.

Take a trauma-input survey.
Ask yourself:



"How does my day start?" Be mindful of how many disturbing images, stories, or images of pain and suffering you come across soon after you wake up.



"How much trauma material do I consume during my leisure activities?" For example, do you watch violent shows, play graphic video games, or listen to true crime podcasts?



"What is one part of my day where I could reduce my exposure to trauma information?"